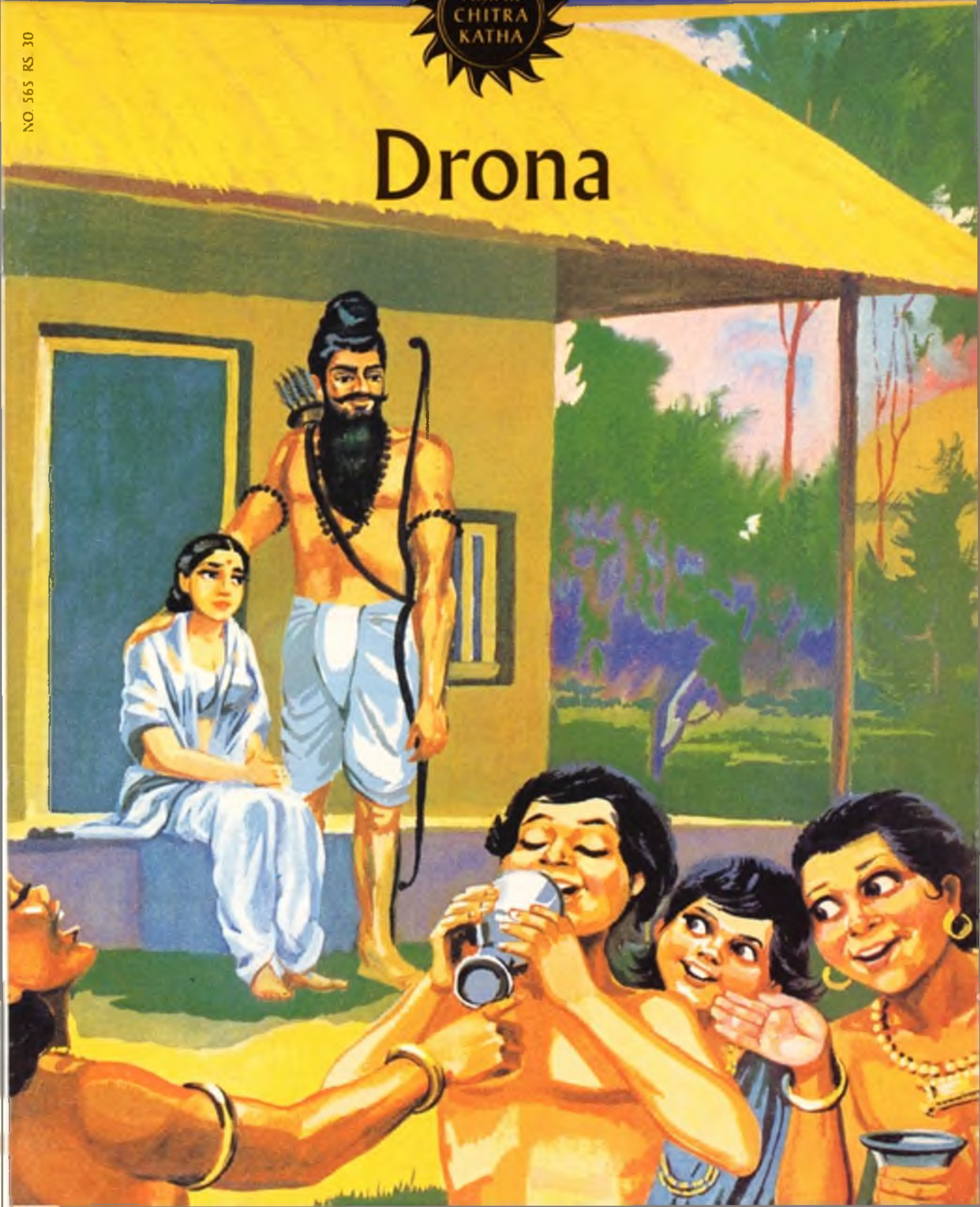
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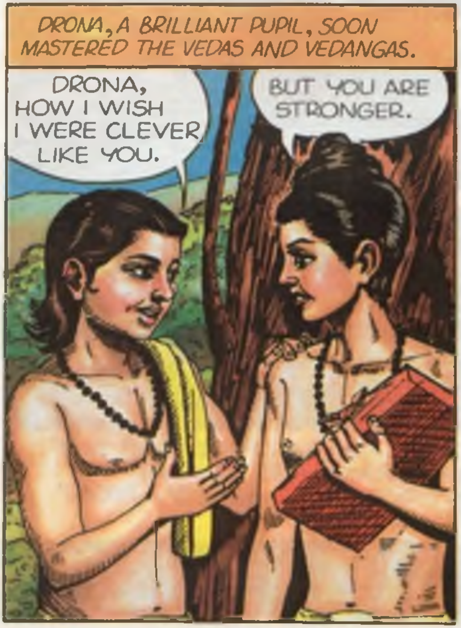
INDIA BOOK HOUSE

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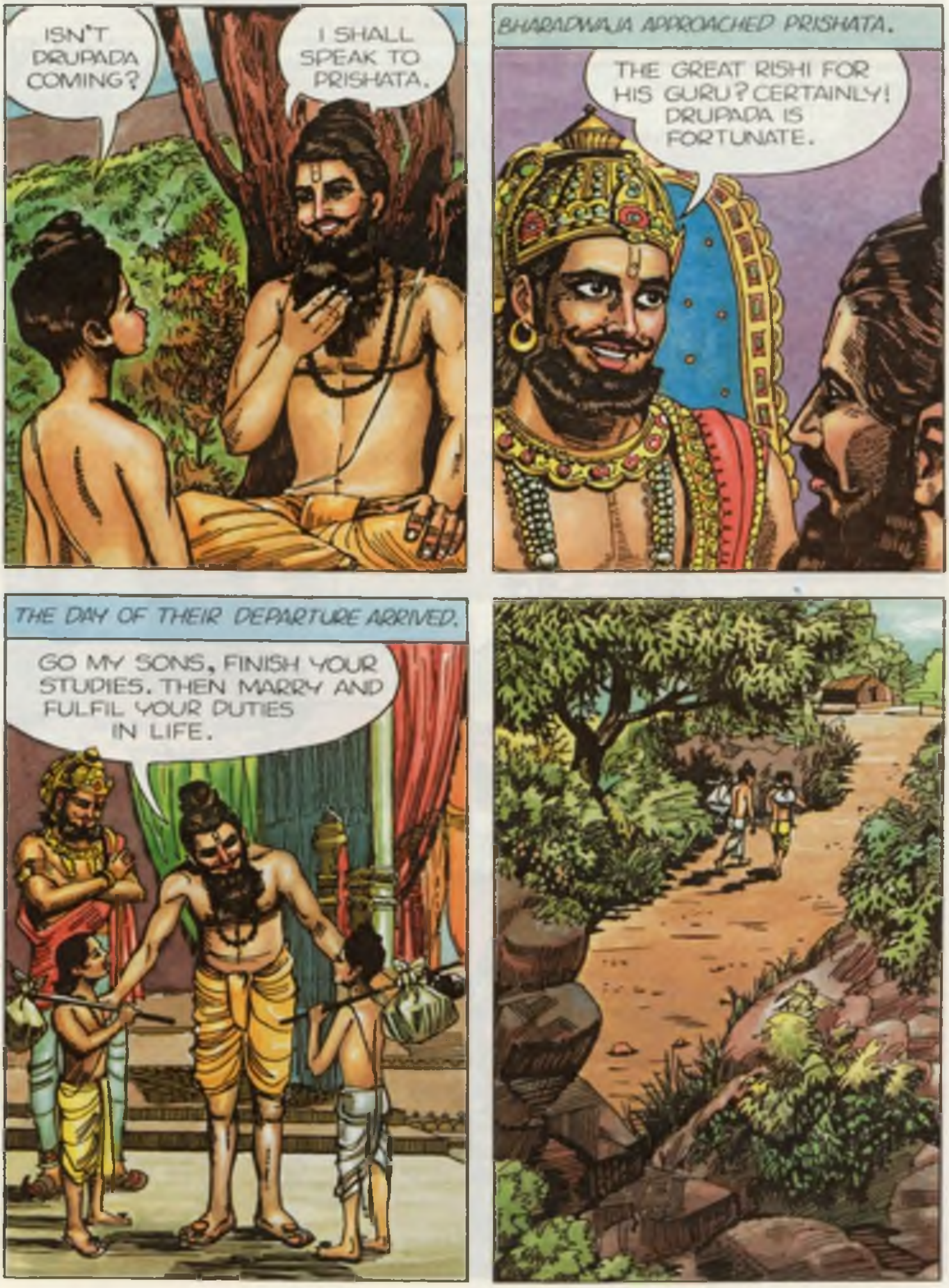

DRONA
DRONA, THE SON OF THE GREAT SAGE BHARADWAJA, WAS SO NAMED BECAUSE HE WAS BORN IN A 'DRONA' OR VESSEL.

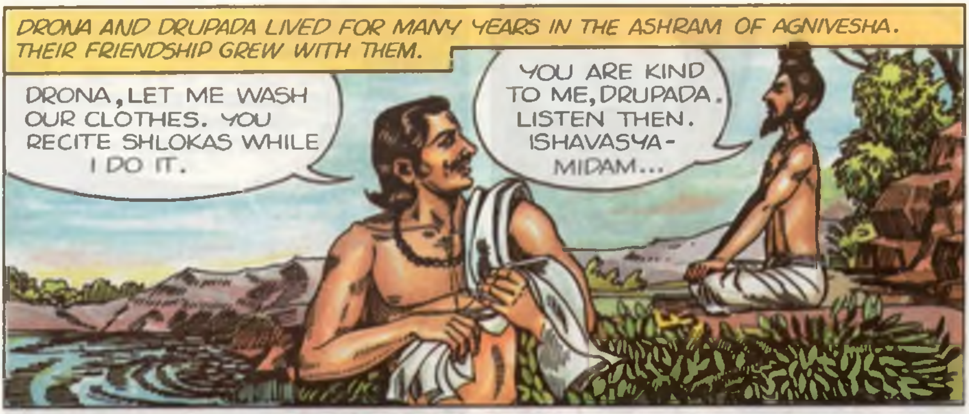

BHARADWAJA HAD A FRIEND IN PRISHATA, THE KING OF PANCHALA.
DRONA IS A CLEVER BOY. LET HIM BE A COMPANION TO MY SON, DRUPADA.
AS YOU WISH, SIR.

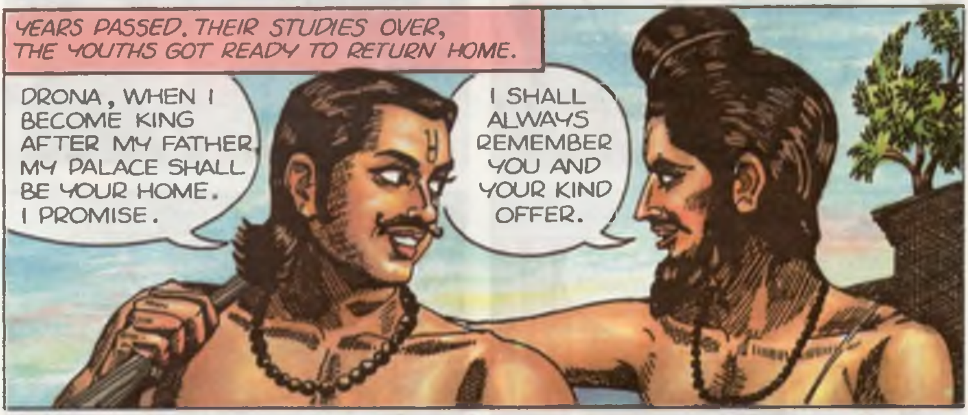

THE TWO BOYS BEGAN THEIR STUDIES.

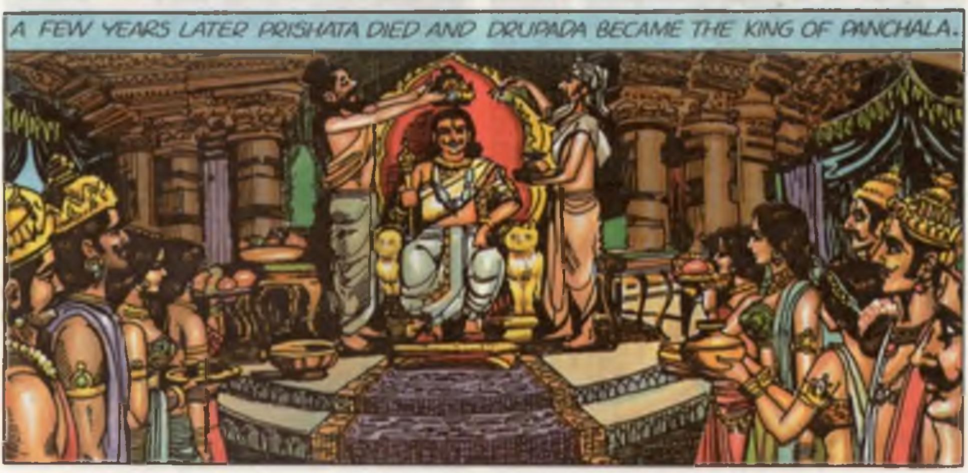

DRONA, A BRILLIANT PUPIL, SOON MASTERED THE VEDAS AND VEDANGAS.
DRONA, HOW I WISH I WERE CLEVER LIKE YOU.
BUT YOU ARE STRONGER.


ONE DAY BHARADWAJA CALLED DRONA TO HIM.
SON, NOW YOU MUST GO TO RISHI AGNIVESHA. LEARN THE SCIENCE OF ARMS FROM HIM.

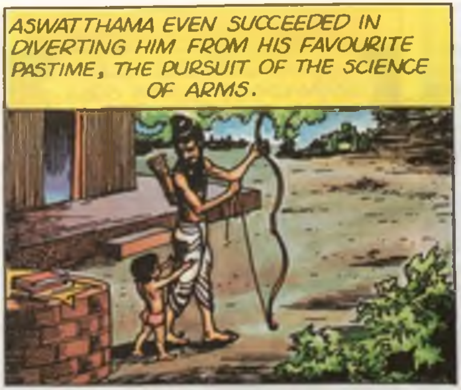

ISN'T DRUPADA COMING?
I SHALL SPEAK TO PRISHATA.
BHARADWAJA APPROACHED PRISHATA.
THE GREAT RISHI FOR HIS GURU? CERTAINLY! DRUPADA IS FORTUNATE.
THE DAY OF THEIR DEPARTURE ARRIVED.
GO MY SONS, FINISH YOUR STUDIES. THEN MARRY AND FULFIL YOUR DUTIES IN LIFE.

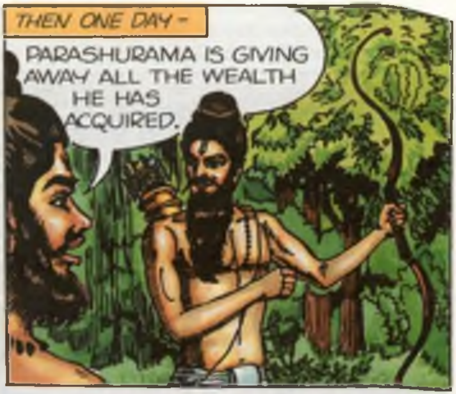

DRONA AND DRUPADA LIVED FOR MANY YEARS IN THE ASHRAM OF AGNIVESHA. THEIR FRIENDSHIP GREW WITH THEM.
DRONA, LET ME WASH OUR CLOTHES. YOU RECITE SHLOKAS WHILE I DO IT.
YOU ARE KIND TO ME, DRUPADA. LISTEN THEN. ISHAVASYA-MIDAM...

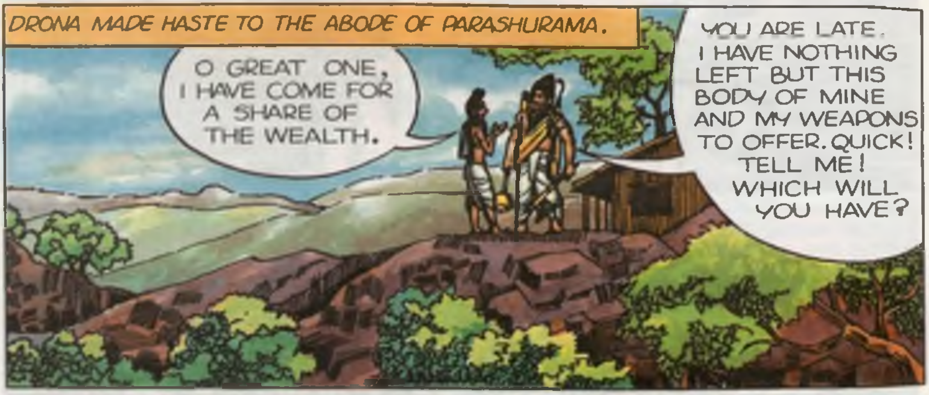

YEARS PASSED. THEIR STUDIES OVER, THE YOUTHS GOT READY TO RETURN HOME.
DRONA, WHEN I BECOME KING AFTER MY FATHER, MY PALACE SHALL BE YOUR HOME. I PROMISE.
I SHALL ALWAYS REMEMBER YOU AND YOUR KIND OFFER.


A FEW YEARS LATER PRISHATA DIED AND DRUPADA BECAME THE KING OF PANCHALA.


THEN BHARADWAJA TOO DIED AND DRONA STAYED ON ALONE IN THE AUSTERE ASHRAM...
...BUT NOT FOR LONG.
MY FATHER WANTED ME TO MARRY AND HAVE SONS. SO SHALL IT BE.
DRONA MARRIED KRIPI, THE PIOUS AND INTELLIGENT SISTER OF KRIPA. WHEN A SON WAS BORN TO THEM A HEAVENLY VOICE PROCLAIMED—
THE CHILD SHALL BE CALLED ASWATTHAMA!
TO DRONA HIS GROWING CHILD WAS A CONTINUOUS SOURCE OF DELIGHT.


ASWATTHAMA EVEN SUCCEEDED IN DIVERTING HIM FROM HIS FAVOURITE PASTIME, THE PURSUIT OF THE SCIENCE OF ARMS.

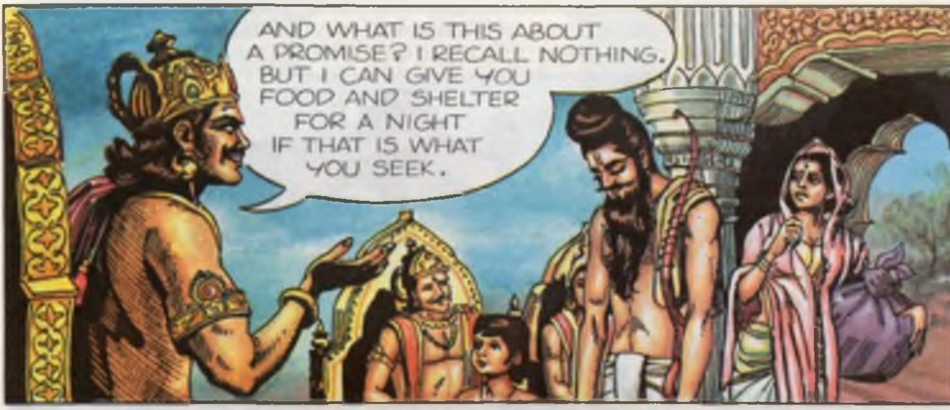

THEN ONE DAY –
PARASHURAMA IS GIVING AWAY ALL THE WEALTH HE HAS ACQUIRED.


DRONA MADE HASTE TO THE ABODE OF PARASHURAMA.
O GREAT ONE, I HAVE COME FOR A SHARE OF THE WEALTH.
YOU ARE LATE. I HAVE NOTHING LEFT BUT THIS BODY OF MINE AND MY WEAPONS TO OFFER. QUICK! TELL ME! WHICH WILL YOU HAVE?


I CHOOSE YOUR WEAPONS WITH THE MANTRAS FOR THEIR USE.
THEY ARE YOURS.

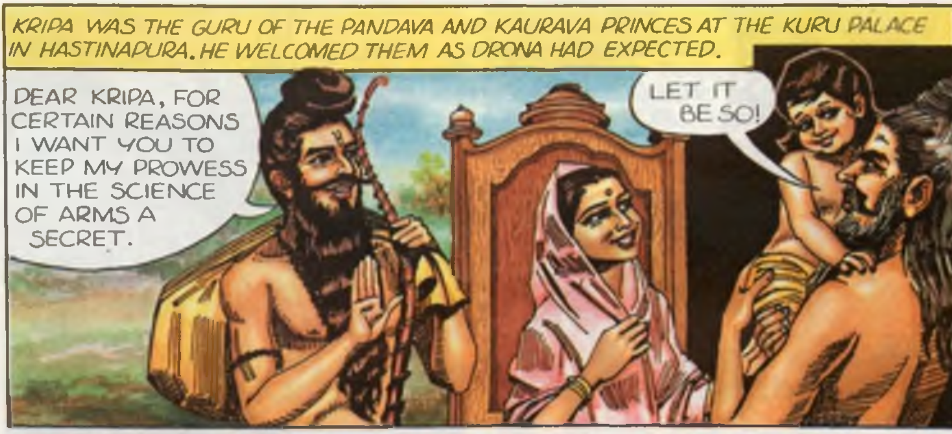

PARASHURAMA GAVE DRONA WHAT HE WANTED, MAKING HIM SUPREME IN THE SKILL OF ARMS.
I HAVE THE BEST OF PARASHURAMA'S WEALTH. I CANNOT WAIT TO SHARE THE GOOD NEWS WITH KRIPI.
WHEN HE REACHED HOME –
KRIPI ! ASWATTHAMA! I HAVE RETURNED!
ASWATTHAMA WAS PLAYING WITH HIS FRIENDS.
WHAT ARE YOU DRINKING?
MILK!
GIVE ME SOME.
THE BEGGAR'S SON WANTS MILK!
THEY MIXED SOME POWDERED RICE WITH WATER AND GAVE IT TO ASWATTHAMA, WHO DRANK IT AND WAS HAPPY.
I TOO HAVE TASTED MILK!
FIE UPON DRONA! HIS POOR SON DRINKS THAT STUFF AND THINKS IT IS MILK!


DRONA WAS MOVED AND ASHAMED BY WHAT HE SAW AND HEARD.
I SHALL TAKE KRIPI AND ASWATTHAMA TO DRUPADA. HE WILL WELCOME US AND HE CAN SHARE MY NEW WEALTH.
SO THEY SET OUT FOR DRUPADA'S KINGDOM.
IN DRUPADA'S PALACE ASWATTHAMA WILL DRINK THE RICHEST OF MILK, KRIPI. DRUPADA LOVES ME AS HIS OWN BROTHER.
DRUPADA, I HAVE COME. REMEMBER YOUR PROMISE TO ME, MY FRIEND? NOW YOU CAN FULFIL IT.
NO MEASLY BRAHMAN CAN BE A KING'S FRIEND!


AND WHAT IS THIS ABOUT A PROMISE? I RECALL NOTHING. BUT I CAN GIVE YOU FOOD AND SHELTER FOR A NIGHT IF THAT IS WHAT YOU SEEK.

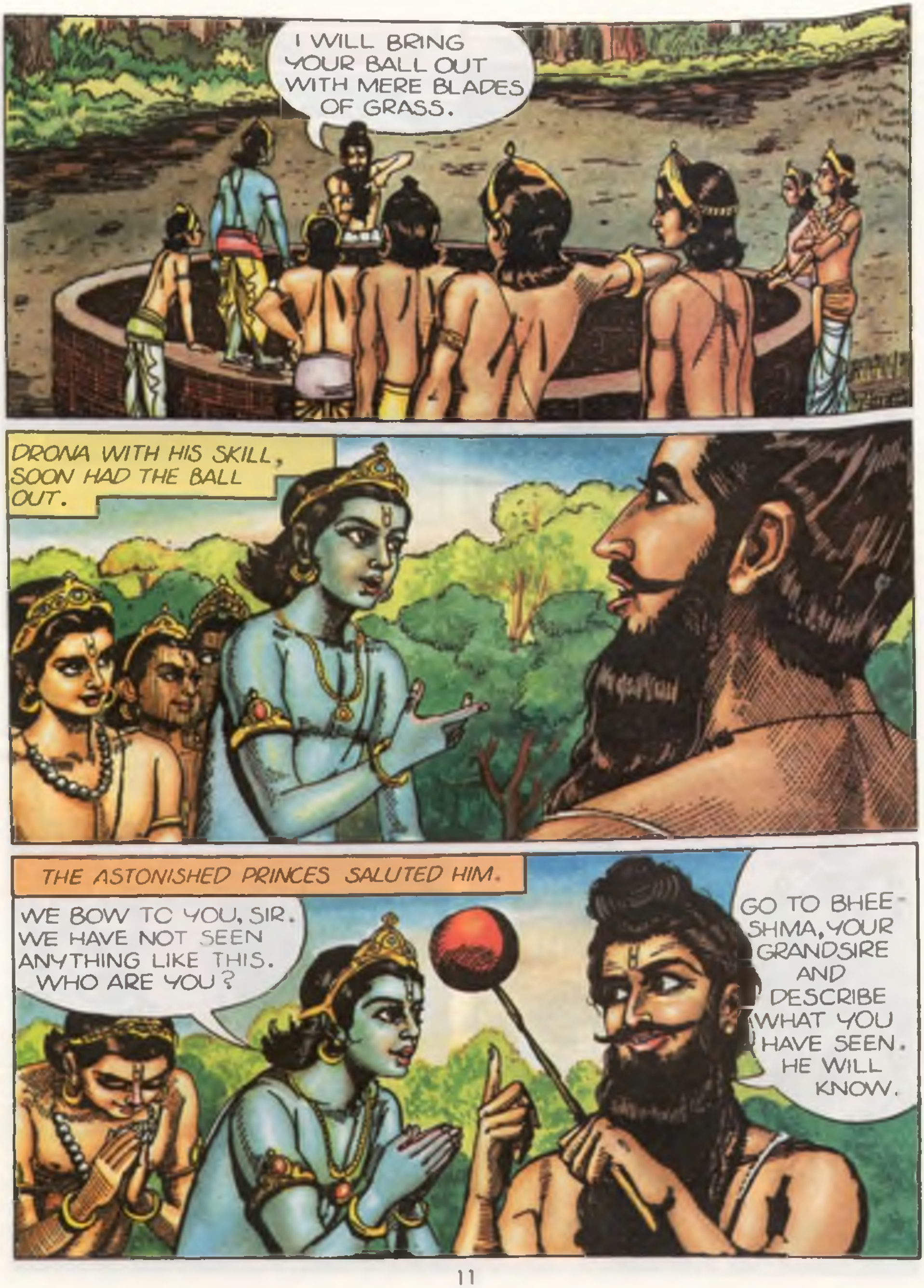

DRONA WAS COLD WITH ANGER AND HUMILIATION.
I SHALL AVENGE THIS INSULT, DEAR DRUPADA, AND ALSO SHOW YOU WHAT FRIENDSHIP IS!


DO NOT GRIEVE, DEAR KRIPI. WE SHALL GO TO KRIPA. HE IS SURE TO WELCOME US.


KRIPA WAS THE GURU OF THE PANDAVA AND KAURAVA PRINCES AT THE KURU PALACE IN HASTINAPURA. HE WELCOMED THEM AS DRONA HAD EXPECTED.
DEAR KRIPA, FOR CERTAIN REASONS I WANT YOU TO KEEP MY PROWESS IN THE SCIENCE OF ARMS A SECRET.
LET IT BE SO!


ONE DAY THE KURU PRINCES CAME OUT OF THE CITY TO PLAY BALL IN THE OPEN COUNTRYSIDE.
OH! WHAT ILL LUCK! THE BALL HAS FALLEN IN.
I CAN SEE IT. BUT IT IS DEEP DOWN.


JUST THEN DRONA ARRIVED ON THE SCENE. NO ONE HAD SEEN HIM APPROACHING.
SHAME ON YOUR PRINCELY MIGHT AND YOUR SKILL IN ARMS!


I WILL BRING YOUR BALL OUT WITH MERE BLADES OF GRASS.
DRONA WITH HIS SKILL, SOON HAD THE BALL OUT.
THE ASTONISHED PRINCES SALUTED HIM.
WE BOW TO YOU, SIR. WE HAVE NOT SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS. WHO ARE YOU?
GO TO BHEESHMA, YOUR GRANDSIRE AND DESCRIBE WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN. HE WILL KNOW.


THE PRINCES HURRIED TO BHEESHMA WITH THE NEWS.
IT IS NONE BUT DRONA. YOU ARE FORTUNATE. BECAUSE IN HIM YOU WILL HAVE A TEACHER BEYOND COMPARE.

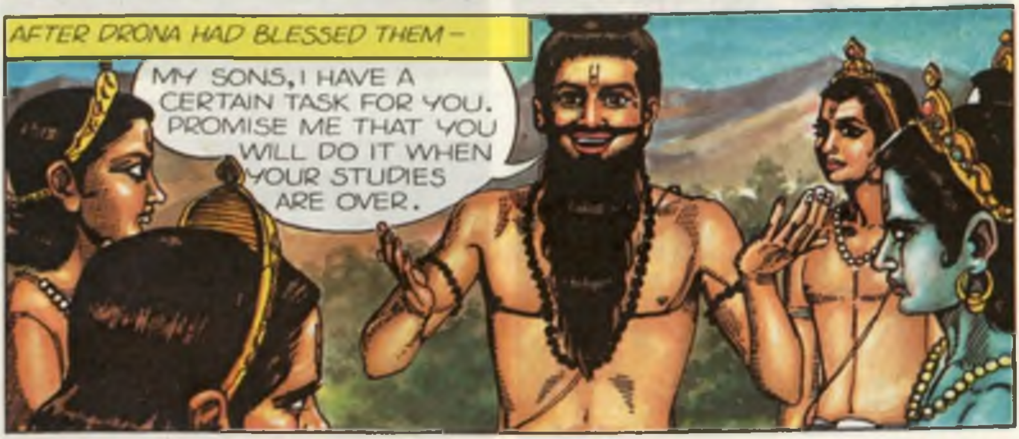

BHEESHMA WENT IN PERSON TO MEET DRONA.
YOU HONOUR US BY YOUR VISIT. WON'T YOU COME TO THE PALACE?


AT THE PALACE –
BUT TELL ME, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO OUR CITY?
I SHALL TELL YOU ALL.


AND DRONA TOLD HIS STORY. THEN –
I COME SEEKING OBEDIENT PUPILS WHO WILL AVENGE MY INSULT.
YOU MAY CONSIDER IT AS ALREADY DONE.


BHEESHMA GAVE HIM A NEAT LITTLE HOUSE WHICH LACKED NOTHING.
YOU AND YOUR FAMILY SHALL ENJOY EVERY COMFORT THE KURU PALACE CAN GIVE YOU.


THEN HE BROUGHT HIS GRANDSONS TO DRONA.
O BRAHMANA, MAKE THE KURU PRINCES THE GREATEST IN THE SKILL OF ARMS.


AFTER DRONA HAD BLESSED THEM —
MY SONS, I HAVE A CERTAIN TASK FOR YOU. PROMISE ME THAT YOU WILL DO IT WHEN YOUR STUDIES ARE OVER.


ALL THE PRINCES REMAINED SILENT.
I PROMISE!
IT WAS ARJUNA, THE PANDAVA.
ARJUNA WAS AN EXCELLENT PUPIL AND SOON BECAME DRONA'S FAVOURITE.
THE GURU IS PARTIAL TO ARJUNA. HE DOES NOT LET ANY OF US SURPASS HIM.
ONE NIGHT, AS ARJUNA WAS DINING, A GUST OF WIND BLEW OUT THE LAMP. BUT ARJUNA CONTINUED EATING.
SUDDENLY AN IDEA STRUCK HIM.
I CAN EAT IN THE DARK OUT OF HABIT. I CAN MAKE SHOOTING IN THE DARK A SIMILAR HABIT!


ARJUNA BEGAN PRACTISING EACH NIGHT WHEN IT WAS PITCH DARK.
ONE DAY DRONA HEARD THE TWANG OF HIS BOW AND CAME TO MEET HIM.
I SHALL TRAIN YOU TILL NO BOWMAN IN THE WORLD IS A MATCH FOR YOU.
AND DRONA KEPT HIS WORD. NEWS OF ARJUNA'S SKILL SPREAD FAR AND WIDE AND PRINCES AND KINGS FROM NEIGHBOURING KINGDOMS FLOCKED TO DRONA TO BECOME HIS PUPILS.
I AM EKALAVYA, THE NISHADA PRINCE. I WANT TO BECOME YOUR PUPIL.
A MERE NISHADA! SUPPOSING ONE DAY HE EXCELS MY ROYAL PUPILS?
I AM SORRY. I CANNOT ACCEPT YOU AS MY PUPIL.
EKALAVYA, WITH BENT HEAD, SADLY RETURNED TO THE FOREST.



THERE HE MADE A CLAY IMAGE OF DRONA, WORSHIPPED IT AND...
...PRACTISED REGULARLY BEFORE IT.
ONE DAY THE KURU PRINCES CAME TO THAT FOREST TO HUNT.
ONE OF THEIR HOUNDS SAW EKALAVYA AND BEGAN TO BARK.
BEFORE IT COULD CLOSE ITS MOUTH, EKALAVYA SHOT SEVEN ARROWS IN SUCCESSION.
WHO ARE YOU? WHO IS YOUR GURU?
I AM EKALAVYA, A NISHADA PRINCE. DRONACHARYA IS MY GURU.


WHEN THEY RETURNED TO THE PALACE, THE PRINCES NARRATED THE WHOLE INCIDENT TO DRONA.
THE OTHERS LEFT. ARJUNA STAYED BEHIND.
HOW COULD YOU ALLOW A NISHADA TO EXCEL ME? YOU PROMISED...
COME, LET US GO AND SEE THE WONDROUS PERFORMER.
WHEN EKALAVYA SAW DRONA, HE FELL AT HIS FEET.
ARISE, MY BOY. IF YOU TAKE ME FOR YOUR GURU, GIVE ME MY FEE!
O ILLUSTRIOUS GURU, WHAT SHALL I GIVE? THERE IS NOTHING I WOULD NOT GIVE MY GURU.
I WANT THE THUMB OF YOUR RIGHT HAND!
WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE, EKALAVYA CUT OFF HIS THUMB AND GAVE IT TO DRONA.
AND ARJUNA REMAINED UNEQUALLED.


AT LAST THE PRINCES HAD ALL BECOME SKILLED WARRIORS.
THE TIME HAS COME FOR ME TO EXACT MY FEE.
ONE DAY HE ASSEMBLED ALL OF THEM.
CAPTURE DRUPADA, THE PANCHALA KING, AND GIVE HIM TO ME. THAT IS THE FEE I WANT FROM YOU, MY ACCOMPLISHED PUPILS.
WE SHALL DO AS YOU SAY.
THEY MOUNTED THEIR CHARIOTS AND RODE OUT ACCOMPANIED BY DRONA.
WHEN THEY NEARED DRUPADA'S CITY–
LET THE KAURAVAS HAVE A CHANCE TO DISPLAY THEIR SKILLS. FOR THEY WILL NEVER BE ABLE TO CAPTURE THE MIGHTY DRUPADA. WE CAN EXERT OURSELVES AFTER THAT.

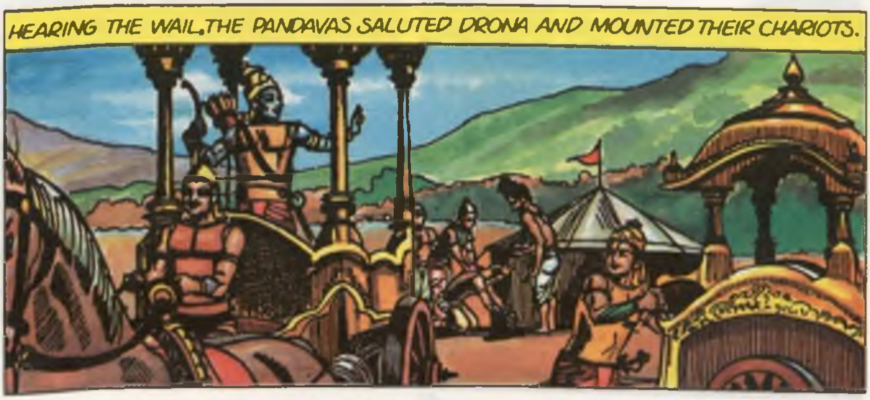

AS PLANNED, ARJUNA AND HIS BROTHERS WAITED AT SOME DISTANCE AWAY FROM THE TOWN.


DESTROYING THE PANCHALAS WHO CAME IN THEIR WAY, THE KAURAVA PRINCES LAID SIEGE TO THE CITY.


MEANWHILE DRUPADA HEARING THE UPROAR, CAME OUT OF HIS PALACE...


...AND BEGAN TO RAIN HIS ARROWS ON THEM.


THE KAURAVAS STUNNED BY THE DEFENCE, BROKE THEIR RANKS AND FLED, WAILING, TOWARDS THE PANDAVAS.


HEARING THE WAIL, THE PANDAVAS SALUTED DRONA AND MOUNTED THEIR CHARIOTS.


BHIMA, LEAD WITH YOUR MACE! NAKULA AND SAHADEVA, PROTECT THE WHEELS OF MY CHARIOT!

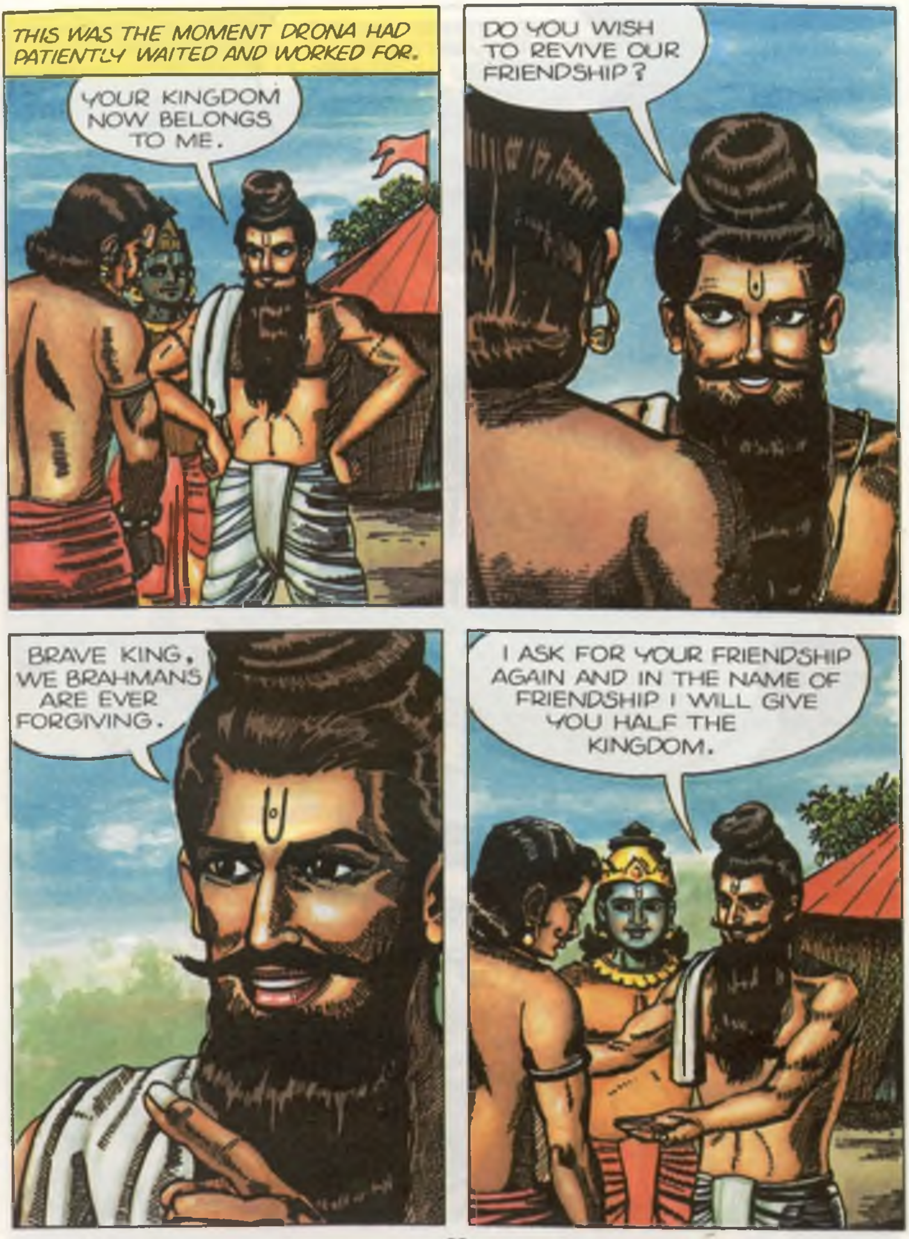


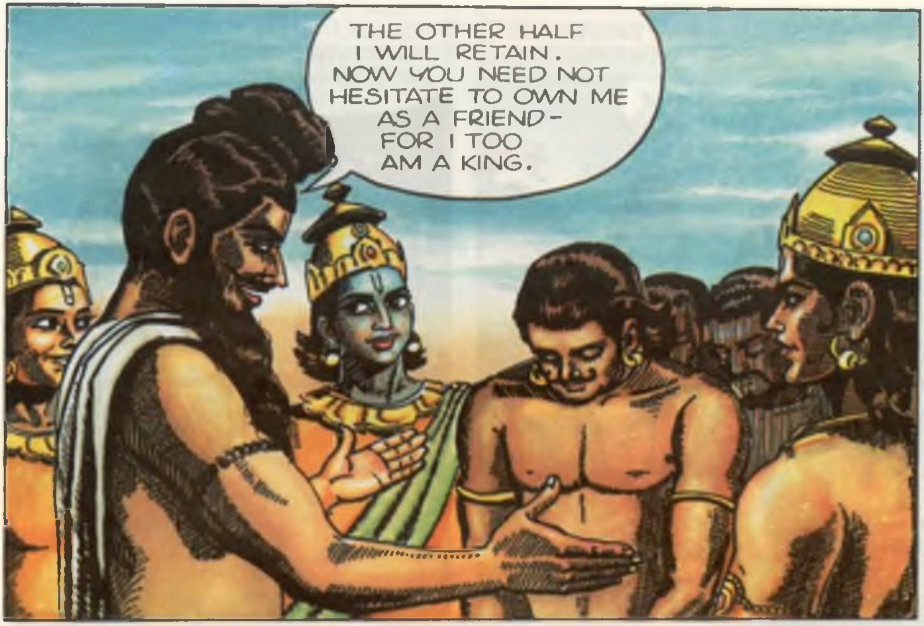

ARJUNA, EAGER TO PLEASE HIS GURU, WENT STRAIGHT ON AND ATTACKED DRUPADA.


HE CUT DRUPADA'S BOWSTRING, COMPLETELY DISABLING HIM.


THEN SEIZING DRUPADA...


...ARJUNA LED HIM WITH HIS FRIENDS AND COUNSELLORS TO DRONA
WE HAVE BROUGHT YOU YOUR FEE.


THIS WAS THE MOMENT DRONA HAD PATIENTLY WAITED AND WORKED FOR.
YOUR KINGDOM NOW BELONGS TO ME.
DO YOU WISH TO REVIVE OUR FRIENDSHIP?
BRAVE KING, WE BRAHMANS ARE EVER FORGIVING.
I ASK FOR YOUR FRIENDSHIP AGAIN AND IN THE NAME OF FRIENDSHIP I WILL GIVE YOU HALF THE KINGDOM.


THE OTHER HALF I WILL RETAIN. NOW YOU NEED NOT HESITATE TO OWN ME AS A FRIEND- FOR I TOO AM A KING.

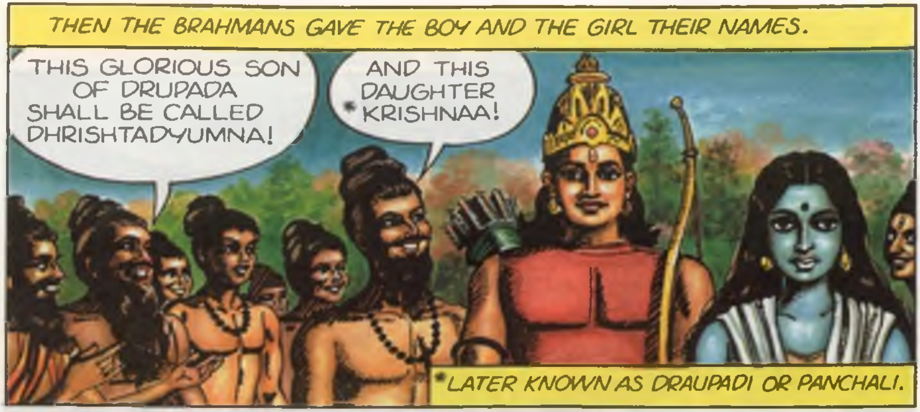

YOU ARE A NOBLE SOUL. I AM NOT SURPRISED BY YOUR ATTITUDE. I AM GRATEFUL TO YOU AND WISH TO BE YOUR LIFELONG FRIEND...
...IN WHICH TIME I SHALL HAVE MY REVENGE.


DRONA BEGAN TO LIVE IN HIS NEWLY-ACQUIRED KINGDOM BUT CONTINUED TO BE GURU TO THE KURU PRINCES.


YEARS PASSED BUT DRUPADA NEVER FORGAVE DRONA.
I SHALL HAVE TO SEEK THE HELP OF ONE WHO HAS EXCEPTIONAL SPIRITUAL POWERS TO ACHIEVE MY END.


SO HE WENT WITH HIS WIFE TO A VENERABLE SAGE.
WILL YOU CALL FORTH A SON FOR ME WHO WILL BE ABLE TO KILL DRONA?
GENEROUS KING, A SON SUCH AS YOU DESIRE SHALL BE YOURS.

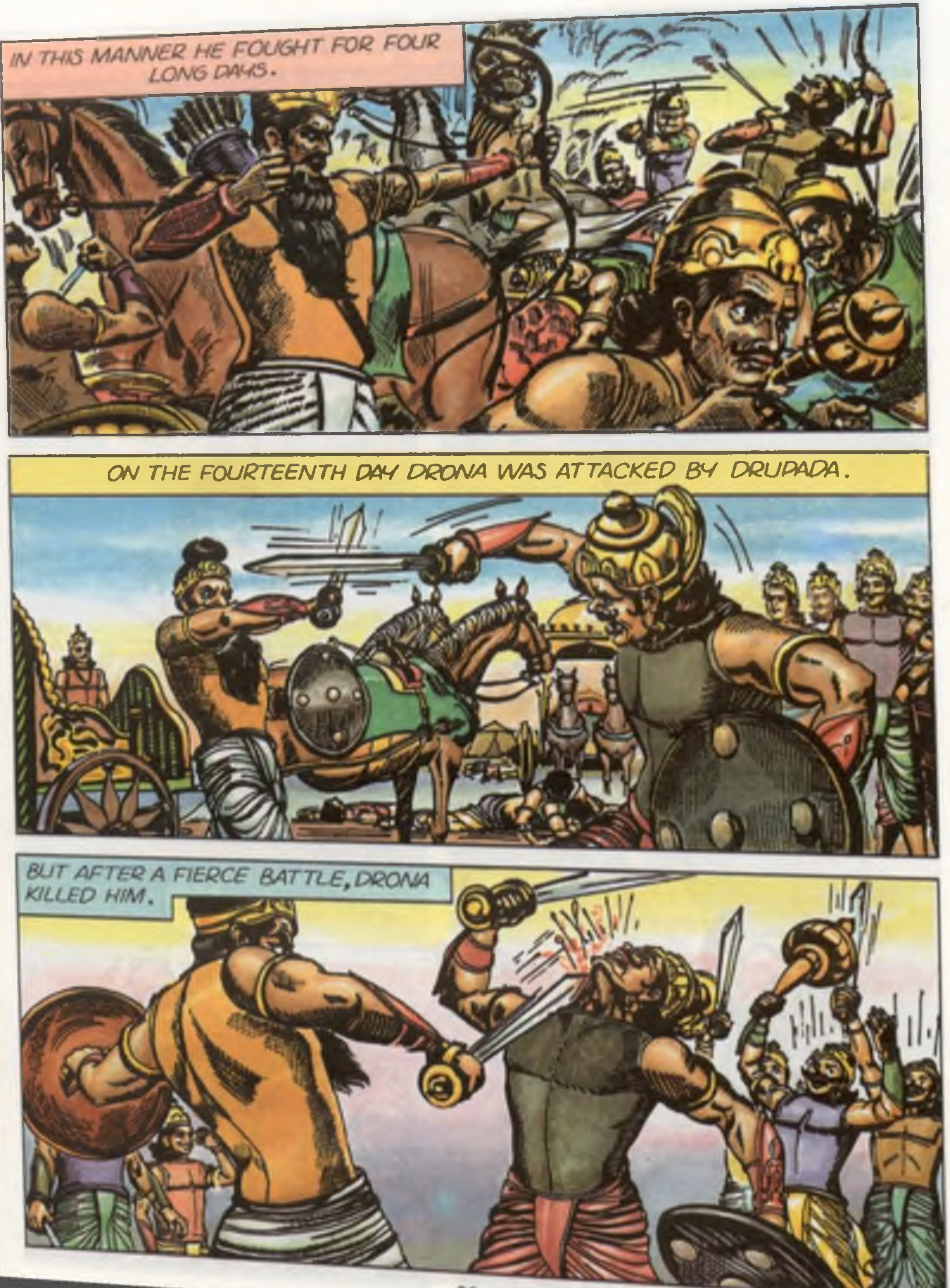

HE PREPARED A SACRIFICIAL FIRE.
OUT OF ITS FLAMES ROSE A GOD-LIKE YOUTH.
THIS PRINCE HAS BEEN BORN TO DESTROY DRONA!
AND THEN, AMAZINGLY, THERE APPEARED A DAUGHTER TOO!
THIS GIRL WILL BE AN EXCEPTIONAL WOMAN AND WILL BRING ABOUT THE DESTRUCTION OF THE KAURAVAS!

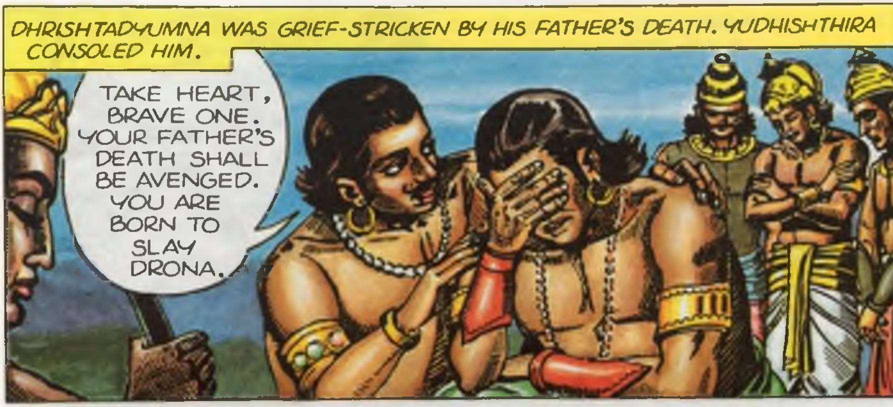

THEN THE BRAHMANS GAVE THE BOY AND THE GIRL THEIR NAMES.
THIS GLORIOUS SON OF DRUPADA SHALL BE CALLED DHRISHTADYUMNA!
AND THIS DAUGHTER *KRISHNAA!
*LATER KNOWN AS DRAUPADI OR PANCHALI.


DRAUPADI BECAME THE WIFE OF THE PANDAVAS. THE KAURAVAS SUCCEEDED, BY UNFAIR MEANS, IN DEPRIVING THEIR COUSINS OF THEIR KINGDOM AND SENDING THEM INTO EXILE. AFTER THIRTEEN YEARS AND MANY ADVENTURES, THE PANDAVAS RETURNED TO ASK FOR THEIR KINGDOM. DURYODHANA, THE ELDEST KAURAVA, REFUSED TO PART WITH EVEN A SINGLE VILLAGE. WAR WAS DECLARED—THE GREAT 18-DAY WAR OF THE MAHABHARATA.
DRONA FOUGHT FOR THE KAURAVAS. DRUPADA AND DHRISHTADYUMNA NATURALLY BECAME THE ALLIES OF DRAUPADI'S HUSBANDS, THE PANDAVAS.

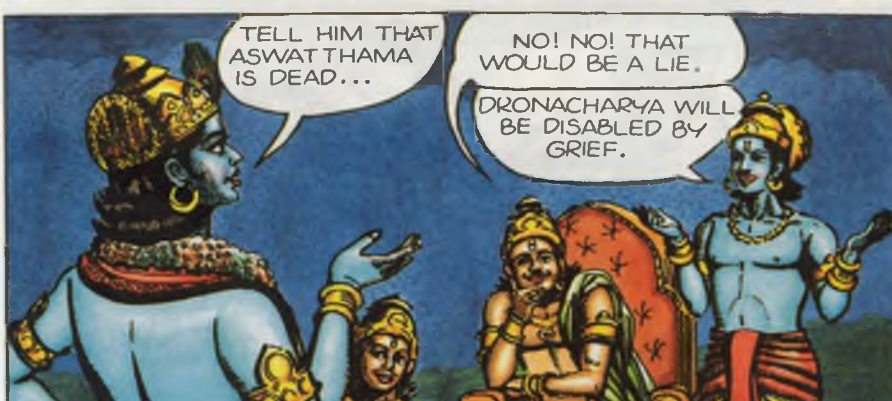

THEIR GRANDSIRE, BHEESHMA, LED THE KAURAVA ARMIES FOR THE FIRST TEN DAYS. ON THE TENTH DAY BHEESHMA FELL.
LET DRONACHARYA COMMAND OUR FORCES!


DRONA FILLED THE PANDAVA ARMIES WITH TERROR AND KILLED MANY OF THEM.


IN THIS MANNER HE FOUGHT FOR FOUR LONG DAYS.
ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY DRONA WAS ATTACKED BY DRUPADA.
BUT AFTER A FIERCE BATTLE, DRONA KILLED HIM.

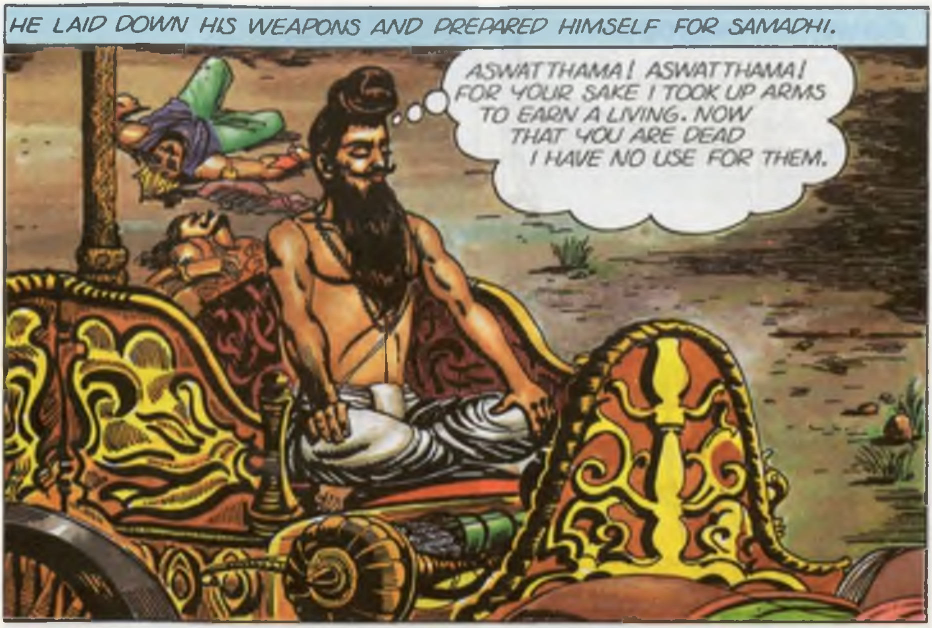

DHRISHTADYUMNA WAS GRIEF-STRICKEN BY HIS FATHER'S DEATH. YUDHISHTHIRA CONSOLED HIM.
TAKE HEART, BRAVE ONE. YOUR FATHER'S DEATH SHALL BE AVENGED. YOU ARE BORN TO SLAY DRONA.

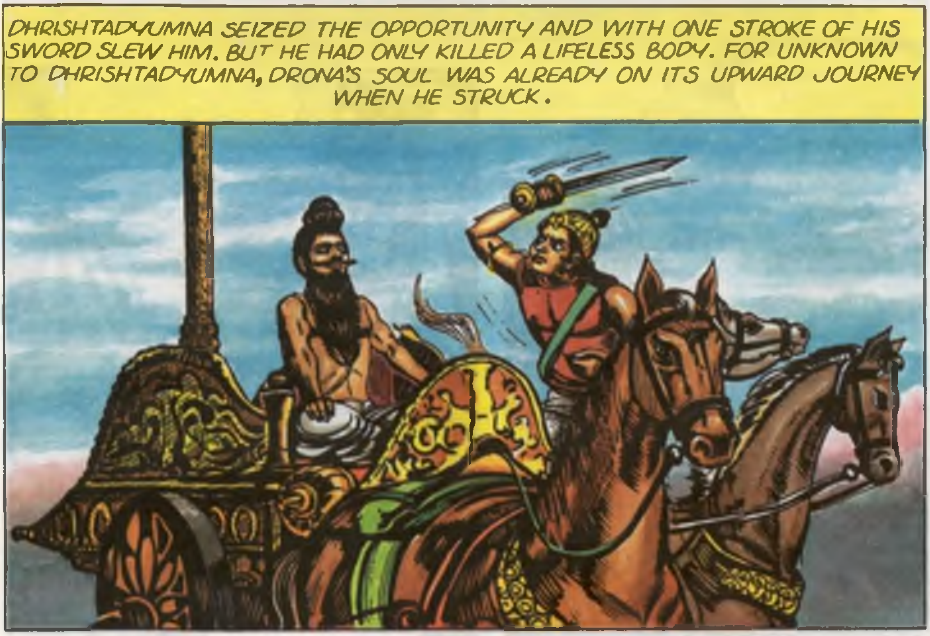

THEN KRISHNA SPOKE –
DRONA IS INVINCIBLE. WE WILL HAVE TO RESORT TO SUBTLE MEANS TO DEFEAT HIM.


TELL HIM THAT ASWATTHAMA IS DEAD...
NO! NO! THAT WOULD BE A LIE.
DRONACHARYA WILL BE DISABLED BY GRIEF.



IF THAT IS WHAT BOTHERS YOU, YUDHISHTHIRA, I SHALL KILL ASWATTHAMA THE ELEPHANT, AND...
THEN BHIMA WENT TO DRONA.
ASWATTHAMA HAS BEEN KILLED!
NO! IT CAN'T BE TRUE. I KNOW HOW SKILFUL MY SON IS.
DRONA REMEMBERED THAT YUDHISHTHIRA WOULD SPEAK ONLY THE TRUTH.
IS THIS TRUE, YUDHISHTHIRA?
YES. ASWATTHAMA THE ELEPHANT IS DEAD.


HE LAID DOWN HIS WEAPONS AND PREPARED HIMSELF FOR SAMADHI.
ASWATTHAMA! ASWATTHAMA! FOR YOUR SAKE I TOOK UP ARMS TO EARN A LIVING. NOW THAT YOU ARE DEAD I HAVE NO USE FOR THEM.


DHRISHTADYUMNA SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY AND WITH ONE STROKE OF HIS SWORD SLEW HIM. BUT HE HAD ONLY KILLED A LIFELESS BODY. FOR UNKNOWN TO DHRISHTADYUMNA, DRONA'S SOUL WAS ALREADY ON ITS UPWARD JOURNEY WHEN HE STRUCK.

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Drona

Drona, the valiant archer, was second only to Bheeshma among the respected elders of the Mahabharata.

Drona had studied together with Drupada, who later became the king of Panchala, in the ashram of Agnivesha. When he was unable to buy a glass of milk for his beloved son, he turned to his friend for help. But when Drupada humiliated him, he went to Hastinapura and became the teacher of military science to the Pandavas and Kauravas, believing that Arjuna alone, amongst all the Kuru princes, could avenge his shame.

He bestowed special attention on Arjuna, and, succumbing to his own motives of personal vendetta, he even demanded the thumb of Ekalavya, the great archer, despite the cruelty of this dastardly act.

Editor: Anant Pai

Script: Kamala Chandrakant **Illustrations: P. B. Kavadi** **Cover: P. B. Kavadi**

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